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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3158
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5508
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2350
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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0633
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0954
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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Hebron Violence

Hebron Violence:

Summary:

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QThe Yesha Council [of Jewish Settlements in the Territories] must come to its senses.... It must stand up to these bullies and prevent them, by force if necessary, from harming their neighbors, the security forces, and indirectly, every person with a conscience and sense of justice.

Ha'aretz editorialized: QEvery law-abiding citizen must say loudly and clearly: I am sick and tired of these self-declared messiahs.... This is the time for the rule of law to exercise its full power against its destroyers.

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QInstead of becoming the answer, the right-wing youngsters] became a problem.

Block Quotes:

[1](#)I. QRestoring YeshaQs Just Cause

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (12/4): QInstead of trying to draft public opinion against the forced evacuation of the house -- there are quite good reasons from both a legal and public point of view -- the rioters did everything to unite the public against them; a public that is demanding the immediate evacuation of the building. Not only did they bring slander on the house, these reckless people damaged the legitimacy of the Jewish presence in Hebron, Kiryat Arba, and to a certain extent even the settlement movement in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank]. The effect will be that some people will cast aspersions on the entire political right, which is now preparing for the elections.... The thugs going wild in Hebron, injuring people and property, are not a protective wall for settlements, as they and their defenders claim. On the contrary, they cause it to stink and weaken it. That is why some people are afraid there are provocateurs

among them. The Yesha Council [of Jewish Settlements in the Territories] must come to its senses. It does not have time to wait until the long arm of the law plucks its chestnuts out of the fire. It must stand up to these bullies and prevent them, by force if necessary, from harming their neighbors, the security forces, and indirectly, every person with a conscience and sense of justice. In this way, by uprooting those rising up to destroy the Yesha settlement movement, its honor, morality, justness of its cause and drive will be restored.

II. "Mayhem in Hebron"

Ha'aretz editorialized (12/5): QThe evacuation of the House of Contention in Hebron yesterday brought a cautious measure of optimism that, in spite of everything, the government has decided to enforce the rule of law and not surrender to lawbreakers and their Yesha Council settler lobbyists. But the evacuation is only one step in the necessary campaign against the settlers, whose opposition threatens to spread throughout the territories.... The feigned innocence of some of the settler leaders and their distinction between the thugs and the Qhilltop youthQ are no more than a rhetorical sleight of hand. The failed negotiations between the QresponsibleQ leadership and the Defense Minister prove that the difference between the leadership and the thugs is semantic. In view of these events, every law-abiding citizen must say loudly and clearly: I am sick and tired of these self-declared messiahs.... The Israeli cabinet, which examines every act and statement in the light of electoral repercussions, is not permitted to let the IDF and the law become a mockery. The IDF must stop the hooliganism and violence from spilling over onto the Palestinian street, which yesterday appeared to be the main victim in the struggle between the troops and the settlers. The settler thugs must know that what they call the Qprice tagQ -- a euphemism used to intimidate the defense forces -- is a double-edged sword. This is the time for the rule of law to exercise its full power against its destroyers.

III. "A Paper Tiger"

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (12/8): QAfter years of telling us frightening tales, they persuaded us that the situation was irreversible. After disengagement and [the evacuation of the outpost of] Amona, so many feared, there was no chance of another evacuation. They're strong. They're violent. They seize every hilltop in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank]. They carry out pogroms. They pay the law no heed and there isn't anyone who can hold them accountable. And, worst of all, they are dashing the chance of Israel being a Jewish and democratic state and are creating a binational reality. If those fears are all correct, that would spell the end of Israel. Nothing sort of that. Because if those hundreds or few thousands are capable of dictating to the millions, then we have reached the end of the road.... Those youngsters could have challenged the anti-Zionists within Israel. Not with force but with spirit. They could have enlisted to help society meet its challenges. But instead of becoming the answer, they became a problem. It was never clear from where they drew their strength.... We are a state without borders. Without identity. We don't even have a self-definition yet. From the middle of the Likud all the way to the middle of Meretz you'll find support for the Zionist idea of a Jewish and democratic state. But a wild enterprise of outposts and strongholds, with and without the state's approval, has led us to ask the following question: Do we still stand a chance? Is there still a way back from that nightmarish vision of a single state? The hilltop youth didn't disappear on Thursday. They were only exposed in their weakness and bravado. This is a moment of weakness for the nightmarish vision of a bi-national state. It is a moment of hope for the Zionist enterprise.

SIEVERS